

5-29-1903

Letter from Louise Imogen Guiney, Oxford, to Anne Whitney, Plymouth, Massachusetts, 1903 May 29

Louise Imogen Guiney

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ters, when I am so brainless. But a
heap of the work is, has long been,
done. I don't know whether I told you
that I have an admirable colleague
on the big H. V., Miss Morgan of Brecon,
the mother of the whole town of
Brecon, and presiding genius of its
destinies: a Welsh woman of purest
gold. She is doing the biography part,
and my share ends with the text and
the annotation. I wonder how you
heard that extremely funny little
report that 18000 copies of 'The Mount
of Olives' were sold? Mrs. Moulton
has it that it was in its eighteenth
edition! What I told Mrs. M. certainly
was that it had been published at
eighteen pence!! and very prettily too.
I don't imagine that 500 copies are
yet taken up, good as the reviews of it
have been. It is in a Series of Devotion-
al books, so-called, issued by the Univer-
sity Press; and each editor, (I with
the others) of each wee book gets fif-
ty dollars down, and no royalty
for ever after! It happened, - but then
that is always happening to me even
here in England, - that my job was
an unusually exacting one for the
money. It is an unimportant affair
on every side, and it hasn't boomed

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My dearest Anne Whitney:
Day after day, week af-
ter week, month after month, I have
been on the point (or dreamed I was)
of writing you. Even in common de-
cency, I should have tried to repay
your latest treasure of a letter. But
I felt loath to send you the scrappy
page-and-a-fifth which is all I seem
able to attain, and so I have let an
unconscionable time go reluctantly
by, 'waiting for the spark from Heav-
en to fall', rather than for any fresh
news to give. I don't know what is
the matter with my head; I am ^{now} per-
fectly well, but I have no energy,
and if I were not waked, out of im-
plored charity, I should sleep fif-
teen hours at a stretch, every night
of my befogged life! It tries me to
see people, or to talk, or to read; and
as for work, though I am eternally
fussing towards it, and love it as
well as ever, the hurdles are too
high between me and the goal, and
I sit down in the grass, and look
at them, and whine.

Ed è natura
Ch'al Sommo [non] pinze noi di collo
in collo.

In short, I am a sort of Sick Soul,
and awfully ashamed of it; and that's
why I can't look you in the face any
often. It is like a far-off music to
hear of your splendid doings, and
of Miss Manning's plans to better
the condition of the adult blind. That
'sticks' me. I want you to give her
my love, and to say that I want her
to let me send her a penny to help
out of the very first money I earn.
But I must earn it. Old people left
destitute, and with their natural uses
in this crowded world taken from un-
der their hands, are the most pity-mov-
ing objects alive. I am so glad they
have, at least in Boston, found their
angel; and I hope the State has given
the appropriation you expected, and
that the great work goes on, goes on.

Mrs. Moulton wrote a week or so
ago that she was coming over here to
this rainy isle, though so miserable that
she could hardly hold her
head up. I think, with you, that she
is a physical wonder. Three days of
her life would sap and wither me, I
know, to a thread. I hope I shall see
her, but I have not been in London but
for one day and night in just a year,
although all the Britishers I know

live there. I do not think there is a
soul in this blessed quiet Oxford who
ever wrote a rhyme, or knows that I
ever wrote one: which is quite as it
should be. And that brings me (by the
pig-like processes which always seem
to govern my letters, - or bulletins, rather,
- to you) to tell you what my plans
are. At present I am unutterably stale,
flat, and unprofitable, though I have
not lost the exterior power to whip up,
and 'look pleasant' when anybody is
about. You will have seen a sort of a
poem about a tree in the June Harper,
which dates from last year. I am dim-
ly hopeful to get two prose articles
done which were begun last autumn;
but they stand like mules, so far. Then
I am under contract to have 1st the
Hurrell Froude book (a memoir pour
servir, and acres of stuff written a-
bout him by others, which I have on-
ly to edit) 2^d, the big Vaughan; 3^d,
a little Vaughan, consisting of his
best poems only, for Fisher Unwin's
Welsh Library; 4th, your book of
Guiney's Collected Vanities, all
ready for the press by Christmas
next... which God grant I wonder
at my own impudence in such mat-

the Mother and I were for three weeks, and got into
first-rate shape generally. (I relapsed promptly, on
Returning to Devon, into sloth and stupidity. She air
here must be the deadener it is said to be!) While we
were away, we had the invaluable luck to pick up a
housekeeper, general servant, or whatever you call her,
for a long. She is idle, or nearly, but excessively
active, decent to a fault, and she goes meowing around
looking for work in shales and clacks! A paragon
in short. She wheels go round beautifully since she
came, and my Mother rejoices, after much tribulation.
The name of the Old and Willing is just. It is per-
haps praise enough to say that never, by any chance,
do you feel inclined to ~~reiterate~~ her own name to her!
My mother is very well. She won't
like to let our dear Maine shanty, despite the mis-
guides, instead of in this cool rainy town. I often
talk of it, too; but I generally end by WEEPS, because

But in this particular Johnson act-
ticle, which I actually read ^{over}, with
wonder and fear and apprehension,
I couldn't find a trace of preciousness.
It seemed to me quite blamelessly
flat and dull, and not a borrowed
plume worth notice stuck in its cap.
That particular variety of criticism
is paralyzing, when you know you
are going ahead with an honest
literary intention, and not trying to
dazzle the populace with spangles.
So if you see me (as is perhaps in-
evitable) winking towards ^{William} Hazlitt;
and tagging an Elizabethan adject-
ive to something I saw but yester-
day, just go in a corner, and curse
me, or pray for me: but don't let
me know you think me an affect-
ed baggage. For that I can't stand.
I bairn! No'm: it is an honest
Louise Jimoquem. Don't shoot the
pianist: he is doing his best. It
strikes me that you believe I'm
honest! And I want you to, so I do.

Some six weeks ago, we
went off, for a wonder, ^{50 miles} to Bath, where
there is bracing air, and medicinal
water; and there and thereabouts

I don't want to go...o...o ho...o...ome!
You see I am a fool absolute. Just
to hide away here, and be still, and
burrow through the dark into some
measure of light, - that's my wish
and will, and all I am good for, at
present. D.V., I shan't post to you,
next time, such a blue devil of a
script! Be good to the bore, and
let me hear of you at Plymouth,
or you at Shelburne. Mrs. M. E.
Blake wrote me this spring. Says
she: 'I saw your friend Miss Anne
Whitney lately. What a perfectly
beautiful head and face!' I
thought your Excellency would
like a compliment straight from
the shoulder of such a dear duck
of a woman: so I saved it for you.
Good night; fare you ever so well,
and with my love to swell the
favoring breeze.

Yours always and altogether,
L. D. G.

29 May, 1903.

57 S. John's Road, Oxford?

this pauper one bit! I can't make
money; I never could. Governor Rus-
sell used to say: 'There's such a
thing as making a living; and there's
making a life.' The latter failure
is the only one I really feel. But I
will try to keep my forlorn end up,
until I can get up intellectual and
moral speed again. You, yes, you,
the only Anne Whitney, gave me a
terrible dig about that paper I sent
The Atlantic about poor Lionel John-
son. And Alice Brown said the very
same, in other words: that it was
needlessly cumbered with allusion,
was 'booky', 'learned', &c. This sort
of comment almost drove me from
my own country! I don't know what
it means, nor how I can have de-
served it. Nobody seems to mind
over here, if you prefer to ^{from memory} quote a
thing once said by somebody else
perfectly, and for ever, rather than
use your own blundering tools in
saying it yourself. And so sup-
pose I have the habit, though I nev-
er quoted for show in all my life,
nor ever searched in anthologies for
adventitious aids in making a point.



To/ Miss Anne Whitney,
~~The Charlesgate, Boston,~~
- Massachusetts,
U. S. A.
Plymouth.

May 29
Jm

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